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SUBJECT: KING, NAVY SECRETARY DISCUSS BILATERAL RELATIONS,
IRAN, BAHRAIN ELECTIONS

Classified By: CDA Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (S) King Hamad told Secretary of the Navy Winter November 26 that Bahrain's relationship with the U.S. Navy was fundamental to the stability and prosperity of the country and region. The Navy has been an ambassador and liaison between the two countries and Bahrain has benefited from joint exercises and training. The King praised President Bush's support, including elevating Bahrain to the status of Major Non-NATO Ally and promoting the free trade agreement. He warned that Iran is very active in the region and commented that it was not right for Iran to have a nuclear program controlled by only one man. He said it is best to stop the nuclear program, by force if necessary, and stated in a joking (?) manner that it might be best for Israel to hit Iran, although he noted the potential realignments that could be triggered by such an event. President Ahmadi-Nejad's plan is to get Iranians to look outward and ignore their internal problems. The King said he is confident in Bahrain's internal situation and was proud that elections the previous day had gone well. He called Bahraini citizens "our true defensive line." End Summary.

Relationship with U.S. Navy "Our First One"

¶2. (C) King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa November 26 welcomed Secretary of the Navy Winter to Bahrain and praised the long

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history between Bahrain and the U.S. Navy. He termed Bahrain's relationship with the Navy "our first one," noting that he was born at the same time that the Navy first established a presence in Bahrain. The Navy, he said, has been "an ambassador and liaison to the United States" and it has done a great job to promote stability and prosperity in the country and region. The King added that Bahrain had learned a lot from the Navy through joint exercises and training. Bahrain's frigate Sabha, he noted proudly, had been used in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom and had been deployed to the Northern Gulf during OIF. The Secretary responded that NAVCENT's presence in Bahrain represents a very important activity for the United States. The two largest fleet concentration areas outside the U.S. are the Fifth Fleet in Bahrain and the Seventh Fleet in Japan.

¶3. (C) The King stated that President Bush has been a wonderful friend to Bahrain. He supported Bahrain's

elevation to the status of Major Non-NATO Ally and promoted the U.S.-Bahrain free trade agreement (FTA). Bahrain wants to remain the U.S. Navy's base in the region and will do whatever it can for the Navy. He noted that the U.S. and Bahrain had stood together in the face of threats over the years, including containing the Soviet Union in the Gulf region (referring to the war in South Yemen), Nasser's pan-Arabist expansionism, and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. He added that the FTA would help promote further prosperity in Bahrain. The Secretary stated that the more that the United States and coalition countries work together economically, the better off we will all be, and the FTA provides the mechanism to enhance the economic relationship.

Stop Iran's Nuke Program, With Force If Necessary

14. (S) The King warned that Iran is very active in the region, particularly in Qatar and the UAE. Iran thinks it is smart and powerful, but it is not. The Iranian government represents only a minority of the people in Iran, which is composed of Baluchis, Azeris, Kurds, and Arabs in addition to Persians. In Iran, only those that are part of the system can participate in politics. This is not a true democracy.

15. (S) It is not right, the King said, for Iran to have a nuclear program controlled by "only one man." An Iranian nuclear bomb would be a nightmare for the Gulf states. He said he does not know if Israel can be patient while the Iranian government issues threats. What is the best course of action, he asked. Is it to accommodate Iran and allow it to have a nuclear program? "I think it is best to stop the nuclear program, with force if necessary." We in the region, he said in a joking (?) tone, have no problem if Iran is hit. It would be better if Israel does it. If they don't, Iran

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will hurt them, the King stated. He also noted the potential realignments that could be triggered by such an event. He then stated that, unlike North Korea, which is surrounded by influential powers (China, Republic of Korea, Japan), nuclear weapons in Iran would truly tip the balance of power in the Gulf region.

16. (S) The Secretary commented that there is a big problem of transparency with Iran's nuclear program. No one can say what Iran plans to do with its program. The King replied that the nuclear program is targeting the Gulf states and is an instrument of Iran's policy of dominating the region. Remember what Khomeini said about exporting the revolution, he warned. (Iranian President) Ahmadi-Nejad is a young Khomeini. His plan, the King said, is to get Iranians to look outward and ignore their internal problems.

Citizens "Our True Defensive Line"

17. (C) The Secretary congratulated the King on the conduct of elections the previous day which, according to preliminary reports, appeared to have gone well. The King said he is comfortable and confident with Bahrain's internal situation. "Yesterday," he said, "we saw Bahrainis queuing for elections, and there was not one single incident." He stated that when he saw people out voting, he thought that "this is our true defensive line. We showed the world that we do our business well and can manage ourselves well." Just as Bahrain was influenced by the democracy the United States, Bahrain's democracy (though different from that in the U.S. and other countries), will likewise influence other countries in the region.

18. (U) Secretary Winter cleared this cable.

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